

SPARK GAP MARC

Challenges!

I just realized today that all the challenges are gone from Amateur Radio. Where did I learn this you ask?. Since the beginning of the hobby, it has considered to be very evident that, **"HAMS enjoy a challenge!"**

"Well," I ask, "Do they?". It seems that all the real "HAMS " have left the amateur radio ranks for the new and exciting challenges of the "INTERNET"!

Guess those elite fraternity groups called Ham Clubs don't offer enough challenge.

Guess the challenge of communicating with your fellow HAMS has worn off and abandonment seems the only option.

Gee, not much fun left on the HAM BANDS; if you criticize those who are trying to just plain talk or maybe work some "CW" across the pond.

Not much challenge in trying to hook up a radio to see if will work. Or, maybe just to show a neighborhood kid what "HAM RADIO" is about; just as you see it.

Guess there is not much in the challenge of

keeping "HAM RADIO" alive and not letting it slip into the hands of those money hungry entrepreneurs that say they can provide a better service for all mankind. Or, maybe that idea is good enough for all of you lazy : "I'll do it tomorrow HAMS".

Guess the challenge of turning the Rig on as you drive to work is not worth doing. Perhaps the thought that you might actually have to say something to a fellow ham is too boring to contemplate.

Guess the \$500.00 rig you bought at the last hamfest you attended is collecting dust on the shelf in your garage or basement; because it's not a challenge to mess with it anymore.

Guess the superior fraternities of the "HAMS" will just die for lack of a REAL challenge.

It seems to me that the biggest challenge of all time for "HAMS" is here right now; but we are too lazy and subdued by the computer or other priorities to do anything about it.

By P.E.Watts via E-mail 11/08/99

Club Meeting
Saturday, November 20th
8:00 AM at the EOC

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club

Membership

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club is based in Franklin, Indiana. Membership is open to all amateur radio operators and other interested persons.

Club meetings are conducted on the third Saturday of each month in the training room of the Johnson County Emergency Operations Center at 1100 Hospital Road in Franklin, IN.

Membership dues are \$18.00 per year for full members. Other types of membership are available.

Amateur Radio Operator License testing is offered following the club meeting during the months of March through November.

The club maintains an open repeater on the 2-meter band at 146.835 MHz. Each full member has access to the repeater and autopatch.

Membership dues payment and change of address should be mailed to the club treasurer at the address listed below.

Newsletter

The Spark Gap is the monthly club newsletter. Articles and information that would be of interest to the club members are welcome. Information may be submitted by E-mail or by mailing to the club address listed below.

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Activities

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(W8ISH)
Bob LaGrange
(N9SIU)
Other
Appointments
Pending

Membership

Larry Turner
(KB9PWN)
Bill Goodall
(K9DBY)
Other
Appointments
Pending



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A SPECIAL SERVICE CLUB OF THE ARRL



Cell-Phone Jammers

How often have you seen the signs on restaurant doors and theatre entrances? No shoes, No shirt, No service. Well, now you can add one more service-revoking requirement to the list of public no-no's. No Cell-phone. That's right. According to the Associated Press many concert halls, movie theatres and restaurants are banning the use of cell-phones because users have become rude, crude and annoying. In fact, the problem has become so bad in Japan that a local company is now selling RF jamming devices.

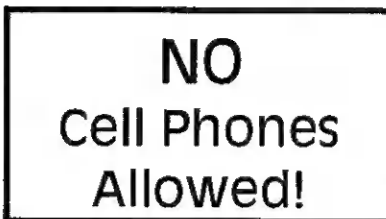
These \$500 low power transmitters broadcast a wide spectrum signal that blocks cell-phone transmissions and reception. According to Japan based Medic Inc., the Wave Wall has a 20-foot jamming radius. Sporting three stubby antennae, it is no bigger than a pack of cigarettes and lightweight enough to be mounted on a wall. Its designed to blanket

small areas, such as cozy coffee shops. Several of the jammers can be placed to work in tandem for larger spaces, including concert halls, hospital hallways or movie theaters.

AP reports an industry poll that showed, 75% of the people randomly surveyed consider mobile phone use in public places to be annoying. Almost half of those polled own mobile phones. But, put your devious thoughts on hold. The FCC has issued a warning that any interference with communications, especially malicious interference, may bring the user fines and jail time.

The solution to this growing problem could come in the form of a special seating area. Who knows, maybe restaurants will add a No Cell-phone area right next to the no smoking area. Weary customers disgusted with loud talking phone users might just eat this up.

- W8ISH



FCC releases warning

In a joint *Public Notice*, the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology and Compliance and Information Bureau say that the use of transmitters designed to prevent or jam the operation of cellular telephones in hospitals, theaters and other locations is illegal. Although such devices are in use in other countries, federal and FCC rules do not permit these devices to be manufactured,

imported, marketed or operated within the United States. Anyone violating these provisions is subject to heavy fines or even prison. The equipment also can be seized and forfeited. OET and CIB emphasize that FCC regulations apply to all transmitters designed to cause interference to, or prevent the operation of, other radio communication systems.--FCC

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*

KLM antennas

As of October 31, KLM Antennas of Monroe, Washington, has reportedly gone out of business. Bruce Scott will continue to sell parts by e-mail orders at klm_antennas@msn.com.

RESTRUCTURING BY YEAR'S END?

Knowledgeable sources in Washington say the amateur license restructuring issue has moved to the front burner at the FCC, and a *Report and Order* could be released before the end of 1999.

The Amateur Radio community has been awaiting license restructuring for nearly one year now. While no one has mentioned a hard-and-fast date to wrap up the long-awaited proceeding, reports from several sources suggest that the draft is in its final stages and could be complete within a month or so.

During a recent visit to top FCC officials in Washington, League officials pressed again for early action on the license restructuring rulemaking. They were assured that the issue was not stalled and that the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau was "working very actively" to move restructuring along.

Whatever its final form, license restructuring poses significant implications for Amateur Radio and its future direction and growth. On August 10, 1998, the FCC proposed to phase out the Novice and Technician Plus licenses, leaving just four amateur license classes in

**Restructuring
"poses significant
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Amateur Radio"**

place--Technician, General, Advanced, and Extra. The Commission also asked the amateur community to express its opinions on Morse code requirements for licensing and testing, but offered no specific recommendations.

At its July 1998 meeting, the ARRL Board of Directors--attempting to get the jump on restructuring--issued its own plan to restyle Amateur Radio. Among other details, the

ARRL plan also calls for four license classes and for "refarming" Novice/Tech Plus subbands to provide additional spectrum for higher-class operators. Under the League plan, the Technician license remains

unchanged, and the General becomes the entry-level ticket to HF operation. The ARRL proposed Morse code requirements of 5 WPM for General and 12 WPM for Advanced and Extra class.

The restructuring debate generated more than 2200 comments to the FCC, many of them from individual amateurs. Once the FCC approves the *Report & Order*, a *Public Notice* will be issued, and the actual *R&O* will be released probably within a few days.

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*

Astronaut Eileen Collins, KD5EDS

NASA astronaut Eileen Collins, KD5EDS, a New York native, has received the Empire State's highest award, the Jackie Robinson Empire State Freedom Medal, for her achievement as the first female space shuttle commander. During the historic STS-93 mission, Collins and her crew deployed the heaviest, largest and most powerful X-ray

telescope ever launched into space, the Chandra X-ray Observatory. The Freedom Medal, established in 1997, goes each year to those who best demonstrate the qualities of determination, dignity, fairness and honor exemplified by Jackie Robinson, who broke major league baseball's color barrier.

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*

When the government plans!

(better double check the facts)

Bob Brunniga, WB4APR, the creator of APRS, has reason to question governmental plans. As owner of the world's first APRS digipeater, he has first hand experience of what happens when the stated procedure does not match the real world facts.

The antenna and two 300 foot runs of 1.25 inch Heliac were located on one of the soon to be demolished Navy VLF transmitting station towers in Annapolis, MD. These very thick towers were used to support thousands of feet of VLF Marconi antenna wire and were built to support 35,000 pounds of lateral load at the top.

A contract was awarded in June for the demolition of sixteen of these towers. Bob had been informed that the crew would start with the 300-foot tower and proceed at a rate of several each week. The tower supporting the antenna for the **WB4APR-1** digi would be the last to fall. This allowed several more

weeks for the antenna and feedline removal. Bob was in the process of organizing a working party to accomplish the task.

At sunrise on November 13th, Bob was all set to observe the felling of the first tower. Bob said, "You can imagine the feeling I had while watching the 300 footer through the binoculars, when it did not move after the initial blast." Out of the corner of his eye, he did see a rather interesting site though. He said, "I caught sight of MY TOWER GOING DOWN!"

While trying to look at the lighter side of this experience, Bob is glad the shed at the base is still intact. He said, "Also it sure was easier to collect the coax!"

What are Bob's final thoughts on this whole affair? "Oh, well, it needed to be upgraded to WIDEn-n anyway!"

- WD9GMM

See a photo of the tower at <http://web.usna.navy.mil/~brunninga/aprs.html>

AMATEUR RADIO SHOWS SLOW GROWTH

According to Amateur Radio census statistics cited in the October 15, 1999, **W5YI Report**, US licensee growth has nearly stalled overall during the past year. The W5YI numbers--which exclude hams whose licenses have expired but remain within the two-year grace period--show 675,739 US licensees as of September 30, 1999. While that's up by more than 3000 hams over the same month in 1998, the number represents less than one-half percent growth.

The number of US amateurs peaked over the past year at 676,318 at the end of July. Looking at the numbers by license class, only Technician showed substantial growth--up by more than 10,500 from a year earlier. Tech Plus and Amateur Extra classes rose slightly too, but the numbers were down slightly for Advanced and General, and the number of Novice licensees declined by more than 5100 over the past year.

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*

If an Indian mother is called a "squaw" is her baby called a "squawker"?

MISSISSIPPI HAM AWAITS COURT DECISION IN RFI CASE

A Mississippi ham arrested for interfering with his neighbors' telephones is awaiting a decision on his request to throw out the complaint on the grounds that the state court has no jurisdiction in the matter. ARRL member **Bennie Stewart, KJ6TY**, of Meridian, was arrested and charged September 10 after a neighbor filed a complaint with the Lauderdale County Justice Court.

Stewart, a ham for 12 years, appeared in court October 26. He says his attorney, Felecia Perkins, filed a request to dismiss the complaint, brought under a Mississippi law that makes it illegal to "intentionally obstruct, injure, break or destroy, or in any manner interrupt any telegraph or telephone line or communication thereon between any two points." Stewart maintains that only the FCC has jurisdiction, and his station is operating properly.

The ARRL has provided legal defense assistance to Stewart's attorney. The case has been continued while the court mulls its

decision. If convicted, Stewart faces a fine of up to \$500, six months in jail, or both.

"It should have never gotten to this point in the first place," Stewart said, adding that he's tried to work with his neighbors regarding telephone interference ever since the first complaints arose three or four years ago. "I put myself on a schedule," he said, explaining that he operates on 40, 20, and 10 meters only on weekday mornings. He says he never operates on weekends, only runs 100 W, and no longer owns a linear amplifier.

"The problem is not here," he says of his station.

A retired professional photographer, the 60-year-old Stewart is confined to a wheelchair. He described his arrest—which he says took place in front of his three-year-old granddaughter—as "humiliating."

Stewart says he expects the court to rule on the case very soon.

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*

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Alleged cell phone dangers

The Center for the Study of Wireless Electromagnetic Compatibility at the University of Oklahoma plans to scientifically investigate whether cell phone use at gasoline stations and aboard airliners poses any dangers. Some gasoline retailers have banned cellular telephone use despite a lack of confirmed reports that cell phone use has caused fires or explosions. Center Director Hank Grant also says the aircraft study will include tests with current and future navigational systems. "By providing information based on fact, we will address these issues in a way that benefits everyone," Grant said.

Reprinted from *The ARRL Letter*